

## "TO THE GENERATION KNOCKING AT THE DOOR."

BY JOHN DAVIDSON.

Break—break it open; let the knocker rust: Consider no "shalt not," and no man's "must"; And, being entered, promptly take the lead, Setting aside tradition, custom, creed; Nor watch the balance of the huckster's beam; Declare your hardest thought, your proudest dream: Await no summons; laugh at all rebuff; High hearts and youth are destiny enough. The mystery and the power enshrined in you Are old as time and as the moment new: And none but you can tell the part you play, Nor can you tell until you make assay, For this alone, this always, will succeed, The miracle and magic of the deed.

## The New-York Tribune.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1905.

The lines by Mr. John Davidson which are printed at the head of this column form the dedication of a modern play in blank verse which he is presently to publish, "The Theatrical: a Tragic Play of Church and Stage." In this, says "The Athenæum," he deals with the relations of the life, religion and dramatic art of the day to what has been called "the new knowledge." What Mr. Davidson thinks of those relations may or may not turn out to be important, but in the mean time his advice to the young generation arrests attention. There is something about it that we rather like. Courage is always admirable, and we have no doubt that that is what the poet more especially desires to see developed. Yet there is another side to the question. After all, many of the younger writers have been occupied in "setting aside tradition, custom, creed," and it could scarcely be said that they have in any rational sense taken the lead. In fact, most of those who kick over the traces leave the impression that they are doing so without any serious justification, but simply in order that they may get into the limelight, and achieve that crowning gift, the publication of their portraits.

Mr. Alfred W. Pollard, whose views on the making of books are always interesting, contributes to "The Academy" a little paper on "Title Pages, Old and New." The first essential of a good title page is, as he says, unity of design, but this is only to be secured, in his opinion, "if author, printer and publisher are all willing to forswear the gentle art of self-advertisement." The point is well taken, and Mr. Pollard develops it in words which we must quote intact. He says:

The worst foe to be encountered is the printer who desires to display the rich variety of his types, but little less dangerous is the author, proud of his degrees and of the various societies of which he is a fellow, or anxious to help the sale of his new book by recalling previous successes, or perhaps, conversely, to make the popularity which he expects from his new book help to quicken the sales of old ones. In this last desire the publisher may be supposed to share, though as a rule, poor man, he stands between author and printer, trying to soften the unreasonableness of both, without himself greatly adding to the difficulties.

This distribution of responsibility must commend itself to the fair minded reader, who has, perhaps, when confronted by a poor title page, blamed everybody save the author! There is a fourth individual who should not be forgotten, the artist who designs the decorative title page. That sort of thing used to get itself done picturesquely by the old Elizabethan designers, and artistically by the Frenchmen of the eighteenth century, but in modern times the title page which is not confined to type alone is apt to be a thing of horror.

In one of the footnotes in George Paston's just published book, "B. R. Haydon and His Friends," there is a quotation from that notorious article on the "Cockney School of Poetry," in which "Blackwood's" for April, 1818, incidentally paid its compliments to Haydon as the "Cockney Raphael." The passage runs in this wise: "Mr. Haydon enjoys every day the satisfaction of sitting before one of the cartoons of Raphael, with his own greasy hair combed loosely over his collar, after the manner of Raphael—hatted among his hatless disciples—a very god among the Landseers." We had supposed that this manner of enhancing the gaiety of nations had become obsolete, but we come upon some remarks in one English periodical which suggest that the old slang-whanging impulse still survives in cheerful state. They are made apropos of a certain writer who has managed, we are told, "without any visible literary aptitude, to establish relations of a kind with literature . . . by his industry in ferreting out facts of no particular importance." This is vivacious enough, but it is nothing to what follows. The exhilarated critic goes on to say of this literary ferret and his facts that "his instinct for these—we speak not in disparagement, but with a certain temperate admiration—is like that of a pig for truffles," and then he adds: "In the periodical press he currently exhibits very much the sort of knowledge of literature that one would expect to be acquired by an intelligent barber who habitually shaved men of letters." We look for the early flashing of a retaliatory razor.

## IN VICTORIAN TIMES.

### A Fascinating Book About Famous People.

MRS. BROOKFIELD AND HER CIRCLE. By Charles and Frances Brookfield. In two volumes, 8vo. pp. 281, 291. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Lovers of the perennially captivating "Collection of Letters of Thackeray," published by the Scribners in 1887, will heartily welcome these two volumes devoted to the pair of friends to whom the great novelist addressed those epistles. William Brookfield and Jane, his wife, were not only comrades near and dear to Thackeray—they were the beloved intimates of all the other members of the most brilliant group of authors known to the England of the last century. "They struck their wits together and always emitted sparks," says the painter of this "Circle," and the pages of these volumes bear joyous testimony to that fact. Some manuscript notes left by Mrs. Brookfield have been used in the preparation of the work, but its material is drawn chiefly from her correspondence and that of her husband. It cannot be said that the let-

The wife of Brookfield was a favorite niece of Hallam, the historian, and a cousin of the Arthur Hallam of "In Memoriam." Jane Octavia Elton was a dazzling creature, whose loveliness Kinglake vowed "conquered and subjugated everybody." Her grace, her lustrous eyes, her enchanting voice were only a part of her charm; she was clever and cultivated, a delightful talker and the possessor of a sense of humor almost as great as that of her husband. Except in her womanly sweetness and goodness she could not have suggested the Amelia of "Vanity Fair." Amelia was not a copy of her, Thackeray once told Brookfield; but the novelist added that he should not have conceived the character if he had not known that "tender lady, kind and dear." Her winning sympathy, her warm heartedness and her wit bound to her forever those whom her unusual beauty first attracted. An amusing effect of that beauty, by the way, is mentioned apropos of the Brookfields' journey in Spain:

The morning after they arrived in Seville, Mrs. Brookfield, who did not know the customs of the country, walked out, as usual, alone. To her surprise and bewilderment, she was in a short time surrounded by six or seven gentlemen and was unable to proceed, for each of these gracefully laid his hat upon the ground before her and stood by in silence. She blushed and bowed, and at length slipped away and hurried back to her hotel. When she told the landlady what had occurred, she

ment in that language which he chanced to have in his pocket. Charlotte Brontë is another figure of the period mentioned by Jane, who dined with her at Thackeray's house. "There was just then a fashion for wearing a plait of hair across the head, and Miss Brontë, a timid little woman with a firm mouth, did not possess a large enough quantity of hair to enable her to form a plait, so therefore wore a 'very obvious crown of brown silk.' The wearer of the crown was ill at ease and the entertainment was a dismal failure. Poor Thackeray, doing his best to make things 'go,' addressed his chief guest on the way down to dinner as Currer Bell. She tossed her head, Jane remembers, and said 'she believed there were books, being published by a person named Currer Bell. . . . but the person he was talking to was Miss Brontë—and she saw no connection between the two.'"

Both Brookfield and his wife have much to say of the Carlyles, and the philosopher generally fares well at their hands. We hear him "laughing like a volcano," or piling his friend's plate with mutton "with a genial homely hospitality which was touching." The young clergyman's first sight of him was in 1841 and he describes the Scotchman thus in a letter to Jane: "Complexion very coarse—and general appearance 'solid in thick shoes.' As tall as I about—and certainly no less ungainly—a hearty laughter with discoloured teeth—very broad Scotch—talks not unlike his writing—unreserved—unaffected of course—a little shy and awkward—but very likable." In after years they often met at the house of Carlyle's patroness, Lady Ashburton, to whom Brookfield once said that she was the only person in the world who dared put a ring through the nose of the philosopher. The little nose of Carlyle's Jeanie disdained a ring, and it is evident that she was a difficult guest. There was grievous trouble when during a Christmas party at the Grange a silk dress was bestowed upon her from the Christmas tree. Perhaps it was a rather tactless gift; at any rate "she vowed she was being insulted, and Lady Ashburton at last was forced to seek her in her room and assure her with tears in her eyes she had not meant to offend." Mrs. Carlyle, as seen by Jane Brookfield, had a figure slight, neat and erect; her eyes and teeth were good, her expression animated. She used "to remain in her own room during the early part of the day, while her husband took his walks accompanied by his admirers."

When she did appear she was always especially taken care of by Lady Ashburton, and she expected and was conceded a certain prominence amongst the many other visitors of more or less distinction in that delightful and hospitable house. Mrs. Carlyle's instinct was always to take the lead. At the Grange this was not easy, for the grandeur and brilliancy of our hostess, who, according to Mrs. Twissleton, scattered "pearls and diamonds whenever she spoke," made her the first attraction and interest to all around her. In conversation, clever and amusing as she often was, Mrs. Carlyle had the fatal propensity of telling her stories at extraordinary length. With her Scotch accent and her perseverance in finishing off every detail, those who were merely friendly acquaintances and not devotees sometimes longed for an abridgement and perhaps also to have their own turn in the conversation.

What must be a much condensed version of one of Mrs. Carlyle's stories concerns a Scotch minister, "who once inserted in his prayer 'and especially we would ask Thy blessing upon a noble and ancient family recently settled in our midst' (said family being present in church) 'and to prevent the possibility of mistake, allusion is here made to the Right Honourable the Earl of Hopetown.'"

Tennyson often appears in these chronicles, sometimes in a comical phase, as thus:

Mr. Moxon said Alfred one day while travelling said to him, "Moxon, you have made me very unhappy by something you said to me at Lucerne," the unfortunate speech having been "Why, Tennyson, you will be as bald as Speeding before long." Poor Alfred brooded over this till on his return to England he put himself under a Mrs. Parker (or some such name) who rubs his head and pulls out dead hairs an hour a visit and ten shillings an hour, besides cosmetics ad libitum. Your father's hair would bristle up at the idea of the Queen's pension being spent in such a manner, but really his hair is such an integral part of his appearance it would be a great pity if he should lose it.

Mrs. Brookfield describes the long-haired Laureate as being very shy, especially with strangers. A charming friend of hers who admired his poetry and wished to make his acquaintance found him most unresponsive at a Brookfield dinner. "Later in the evening, however," says Jane, "when Alfred had realized that this lady was an intimate friend of ours, and that we particularly wished that he should make himself agreeable to her, he with good-natured friendliness said, 'I could not find anything to say to you before dinner, but now that I have a bottle of port in me I can talk as much as you like.' My friend was at first rather alarmed at this playful announcement, receiving it as a literal assertion. But she was soon reassured by the serious interest of his conversation, which realized all her expectation." A quaint anecdote of the poet dates back to one of the Ashburton house parties:

One of these mornings Tennyson came into breakfast rather late, with a perturbed expression of face, his watch in his hand, saying with great gravity: "My watch has stopped; what am I to do?" We all felt concerned for a moment, then Mr. Fairbairn, with equal gravity, rose from his chair, took the watch from Alfred's hand, asked for his key, wound it up, and silently returned it to its owner. He was wonderfully handsome just then, and of a stately presence, and so simple and good-natured in spite of his great genius and great success.

One famous personage after another steps in and out of these pages. Here is that "hideous, odd-looking man," Sydney Smith, "with a mouth like an oyster and three double chins"; here is Edward Fitzgerald "passing the show van of the Corpulent Lady" and saying to Spring Rice "I needn't pay a shilling to see her. I can see my own wife any hour." Here is Southey, even,



JANE OCTAVIA BROOKFIELD.  
(From "Mrs. Brookfield and Her Circle." Charles Scribner's Sons.)

ters are, without exception, equally interesting; but there are few that are not worth reading for one reason or another—as the vehicle of an amusing story or of a witty saying, or of a moving revelation of character or feeling. Here is an inexhaustible storehouse of anecdote of Victorian times—one which may be visited with keen pleasure again and again, and which nobody can afford to disregard.

William Henry Brookfield was a Cambridge man, a fellow student of Thackeray, Tennyson, Kinglake, Arthur Hallam and the clever Milnes who was afterward Lord Houghton. A lovable man of fine character and many gifts, he won from these companions a friendship which never failed. "You man of humorous—melancholy mark. . . . Our kindlier, trustier Jacques," wrote Tennyson in the sonnet in which he mourned the death of this friend of his youth. When Thackeray was nearing his end he responded to his daughter's query as to which of his friends he had loved the most, "Why, dear old Fitz, he be sure—and Brookfield." "Humorous—melancholy" is a phrase which, it is apparent, exactly described Brookfield, for with a serious, even sad, temperament he combined an irresistible wit and playfulness. "He was by far the most amusing man I ever met or ever shall meet," a college don has said of him. "It is not likely I shall ever see again a whole party, all grave and learned men, lying on the floor for the purpose of unrestrained laughter, while one of their numbers poured forth, with a perfectly grave face, a succession of imaginary dialogues between characters real and fictitious, one exceeding the other in humour and drollery." The group of friends were never long apart in after years; they were brought together sometimes by invitations like this of Thackeray's:

If you like two or three  
Of your cronies to see—  
There's a swartry  
To-morrow  
At Mitre Court B.

learned she ought not to have walked out unaccompanied, that "the gentlemen were laying their hearts at her feet, and had she cared to possess one of these hearts she was expected to indicate which by touching the hat that belonged to the favored man."

Hallam, the historian, was extremely fond and proud of his beautiful niece, and she gives many picturesque glimpses of him in these pages. "His nervous energy," she says, "was sometimes betrayed by sudden rubbings of the hands and hasty walks about the room, during which he would remain absorbed in his own thoughts." Agitated at breakfast one morning by the receipt of exciting political news from France, the good man "caught up an empty plate, got up from his seat and walked up and down the room with the plate pressed close to his heart." He was a being of boundless kindness. There is a suggestive story in one of Jane's letters to her husband: "On Harry's talking of teaching the parrot to say, 'Ugly Poll' for novelty. . . . Uncle H's beautiful touch of benevolence struck us all. 'No, no. Why teach a poor, ignorant animal to mock itself?' Jane tells us that her uncle Hallam was of a more adaptable disposition than Lord Macaulay, "who was accustomed to receive, and always expected to secure, an attentive audience and to take the lead in conversation:

I remember sitting next him at dinner, at one period of which I asked him if he admired Jane Austen's works. He made no reply till a lull occurred in the general conversation, when he announced: "Mrs. Brookfield has asked me if I admire Jane Austen's novels, to which I reply"—and then entered into a lengthy dissertation to which all listened, but into which no one else dared intrude, finally describing how some time ago he had found himself by the plain marble slab which covered the remains of "J. A." when he said to himself: "Here's a woman who ought to have had a national monument."

It was at that same dinner that Macaulay, talking of the advantage of learning many languages at leisure times, said that in the course of a fortnight, while travelling in the mountains of India, he had acquired quite a serviceable knowledge of Portuguese from a New Testa-